

Compassion & Choices of Washington

Overview of Washington Death With Dignity Act Legal and Reporting Requirements

For more detailed information about compliance and recommended procedures, please contact [Compassion & Choices of Washington](#) (C&C).

Medical chart documentation: The Attending Physician (the physician who has primary responsibility for the care of the patient and writes the prescription) must document the elements of an informed decision and notes showing compliance with the Death With Dignity Act in the patient's chart.

Right to rescind: The law provides that the patient may change his or her mind about the request for life-ending medication at any time, and the Attending Physician must remind the patient of his or her right to rescind.

Discussion with relatives/loved ones: The Attending Physician should recommend (but cannot require) that the patient discuss their intentions with close relatives, take the medication with someone else present, and do so in a private place.

Consultation with another physician: Patients must obtain a consultation from a Consulting Physician to confirm the Attending Physician's diagnosis and prognosis.

Evaluate impaired judgment: If either physician believes the patient may be suffering from a psychiatric or psychological disorder or depression causing impaired judgment, the physician must refer the patient to a psychiatrist or psychologist for counseling.

Reporting Requirements

The Attending and Consulting Physicians, and pharmacists filling prescriptions, must report information to the Washington Department of Health (DOH) about patients who use the [Death With Dignity Act](#) (DWDA). The DOH forms are available online at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/dwda/> or from [C&C](#). When the patient is C&C client, C&C will assist physicians with the preparation and filing of all required DOH forms.

The DWDA requires the DOH to keep information regarding identity of patients, physicians and pharmacists strictly confidential. No physician or patient names or identifying information should ever be made available to the public.

Timing and Safeguards of the Act

- The patient's first oral request is documented. A 15-day waiting period takes place before the second oral request is documented.
- A consulting physician verifies that the patient qualifies for DWDA (this can occur during the 15-day waiting period).
- Once both Consulting and Attending Physicians have verified the patient is qualified, the patient submits a written request.

Not less than 48 hours after the written request, and after the second oral request, the Attending Physician can write the prescription.